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SUBJECT: Opposition Chadema leaders critique the Kikwete Presidency

¶1. Summary: In a discussion with DCM, two leaders of opposition party CHADEMA recognized that Tanzania's democratic development "has a positive trend line." They criticized President Kikwete's handling of the African Union Chairmanship as unfocussed and reactive. They maintained that by postponing indefinitely difficult decisions and refusing to confront corrupt figures in his party and government, Kikwete is undermining his own presidency and turning serious issues (Zanzibar power sharing, Union status, corruption) into "explosive" issues. There are elements of truth to this harsh critique, but as opposition leaders they cranked it up a few extra notches. State House is chaotic and faction-ridden, with no one serving as a strong Chief of Staff. We continue to urge the President, who we are convinced has good governance policy intentions, to put his house in order. End Summary.

¶2. DCM met with two leaders of the opposition Chadema party, Zitto Kabwe and Dr. Wilbrod Slaa. Both are members of parliament. The meeting took place at Dr. Slaa's parliamentary office in Dodoma prior to Chadema's recent victory in the Tarime by-election (septel). Dr. Slaa serves as his party's Secretary General. Zitto Kabwe is a noted activist and "young turk." The opposition controls 15 percent of the seats in parliament (44 out of 290). Chadema controls eleven of those seats, with the remainder held by CUF (32) and the UDP (1). The opposition parties coordinate in parliament.

¶3. Slaa and Kabwe made the following points, in unison:

On Tanzania's Democracy:

-- Parliamentary procedures and constitutional arrangements were shaped by nearly thirty years of one-party rule. A dozen years or so of multipartyism has not yet erased the legacy of the one-party state, especially as regards the relation between the ruling party and state institutions such as the police, the judiciary and the central bank.

-- Still, we recognize that the trend line is positive. Tanzania is becoming more genuinely democratic. Here in parliament the Speaker has made several important reforms to give the opposition a greater voice and to require consultation with the opposition. We know that he is under severe attack from his CCM (ruling party) colleagues for his reasonableness.

On the Kikwete AU Chairmanship:

-- No one can tell us what Kikwete's agenda is for his African Union Chairmanship. When Ghana had the Chairmanship they announced their agenda and worked that agenda methodically. Kikwete leads the AU just as he does Tanzania: in an ad hoc manner always reacting to events, never launching his own initiatives. When we wish to consult on these issues who do we speak to? No one in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Presidency is designated to back up the AU

Chairmanship, with the possible exception of the Foreign Minister. There is no "AU cell," as there should be.

On the Kikwete Presidency:

-- There is a vacuum at State House. There is no seriousness, no strategic vision, no plan. Kikwete needs to act. He is accumulating problems as he constantly postpones all issues. For the first time in our country's history cabinet meetings are cancelled due to lack of a quorum. Kikwete is unable to get his ministers to attend his cabinet meetings.

-- Kikwete is personally popular, but he is increasingly seen as too weak to address the corruption in his party. He is surrounded by people notorious for their corruption. His image is hurt by this. He is not pulling the CCM up. The CCM is dragging him down.

-- He made a public commitment to resolve the political problem of Zanzibar. He publicly associated himself with the power sharing arrangements in Kenya and Zimbabwe, but is unable to achieve the same for Zanzibar. At Butiama (site of the last ruling party conference) he allowed himself to be humiliated by Karume (President of Zanzibar). His strength within the party is undermined by his refusal to confront anyone.

-- Kikwete's weakness directly led to the worsening relations between Zanzibar and the Union. Now that politicians like Karume see that Kikwete will not confront them and will indefinitely put off difficult decisions, they are successfully manipulating him to the detriment of the country. These issues (Zanzibar power sharing, union, corruption, etc.) do not improve with age, they only become more "explosive."

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14. Comment: There are elements of truth to this harsh critique, but as opposition leaders they cranked it up a few extra notches. We too have lamented the lack of discipline and the apparent lack of strategic thinking at State House. We have also witnessed the tendency to put off difficult decisions, especially on Zanzibar and corruption. State House is chaotic and faction-ridden and no one serves as a strong Chief of Staff. We continue to urge the President, who we are convinced has good governance policy intentions, to put his house in order. A former Foreign Minister, Kikwete clearly relishes the international stage and is effective at working regional issues. However, for the good of the country and his own political standing, he must devote more of his attention to the responsibilities of Chief Executive.

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